

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEHXASSY OUAGADOUGOU

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TAGS: EAID, ML

SUBJ: DROUGHT SITUATION IN MALI: NIGER RIVER' S INLAND DELTA AND
MOPTI AREAS

REF: BAMA KO 1010

1. NIGER RIVER' S INLAND DELTA IS NORMALLY MALI' S (AND WEST AFRICA' S)
BEST CATTLE COUNTRY. USUALLY THIS TIME OF YEAR DELTA IS FULL
OF MALIANS, MAURITANIAN AND EVEN UPPER VOLTAN HERDSMEN, BUT THIS
YEAR MANY MOVED SOUTH EARLIER BECAUSE THEY FORESAW OVERGRAZING
PROBLEMS. ON SOUTHERN AND EASTERN EDGES OF DELTA ARE MILLET
PRODUCING AREAS, WHICH BECOME INCREASINGLY LESS MARGINAL AS ONE
GOES TOWARDS MOPTI. ALONG NIGER ARE RICE FIELDS. THIS YEAR' S
MILLET CROP IN CIRCLE OF MOPTI ONLY 25 PERCENT NORMAL AND RICE
CROP WAS TOTAL FAILURE. VERY LITTLE GRAIN HAS BEEN BROUGHT IN
FROM OUTSIDE. ON FARMS AND AMONG NOMADS PRESENT GRAIN STOCKS
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ARE IN MOST CASES ALMOST EXHAUSTED. EVEN AREA OF OPERATION MILLET AROUND BANKASS AND KORO, NORMALLY A SURPLUS MILLET AREA, NEEDS GRAIN TO BE SHIPPED IN, LARGELY BECAUSE OF PRESENCE REFUGEES FROM LESS FAVORED AREAS. OPAM SUPPLY FOR MOPTI WILL LAST ONLY UNTIL MAY 20. GOVERNOR MUST THEREAFTER RECEIVE CONTINUOUS SUPPLY FROM BAMAKO BY TRUCK OVER NEXT SEVEN MONTHS TO AVOID PROGRESSIVE FAMINE. HIS PROBLEM COMPLICATED BY CONTINUING ARRIVAL OF FARMERS AND EVEN NOMADS FROM PARCHED AREAS, WHO COME IN SEARCH OF GRAIN. MOPTI'S POPULATION HAS GONE UP FROM AROUND 20,000 TO 110,000. THIS IS MALI'S MOST DRAMATIC CROWDING PROBLEM, WHICH EASES RELIEF IF GRAIN STOCKS ARRIVE AND COMPOUNDS MISERY IF THEY DON'T. PROBLEM COULD BE FURTHER COMPLICATED BY ARRIVAL EVEN MORE REFUGEES FROM DISASTER AREAS OF NORTH-EASTERN DROUGHT ZONE (BAMAKO 1010). EVERYONE WITH WHOM EMBOFFS TALKED SPOKE WELL OF ARMY AND OPAM DISTRIBUTION EFFORTS, WHICH WAS CERTAINLY NOT ALWAYS THE CASE IN THE PAST. MOPTI'S GOVERNOR MAIGA IS ACTIVE, CAPABLE "GENDARMERIE" OFFICER WHO MERITS TRUST THAT PEOPLE OF THIS REGION HAVE IN HIM. GERMAN AND SOVIET AIRLIFT IMPROVED MORALE IN MOPTI EVEN THOUGH AMOUNTS OF GRAIN DELIVERED TO MOPTI WERE NOT GREAT. IF SUFFICIENT GRAIN ARRIVES IN MALI FROM PORTS, SUPPLYING MOPTI REGION BY TRUCK OR (IN AUGUST) BY RIVER WILL NOT BE DIFFICULT, BUT WITH PRESENTLY AVAILABLE STOCKS BLOCKED IN PORTS, HUNGER IF NOT SICKNESS APPEARS TO BE IN STORE FOR THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE IN MOPTI AREA UNTIL NEW CROPS COME IN. 11,200 TONS CEREAL ESTIMATED NECESSARY FOR THIS AREA UNTIL HARVEST TIME.

3. CONDITION OF CATTLE REMAINING IN INLAND DELTA, PARTICULARLY NORTHWESTERN PARTS, CAN ONLY BE CALLED DISASTROUS. THOSE HERDSMEN WHO WEREN'T WISE ENOUGH TO MOVE THEIR CATTLE OUT BY EARLY THIS YEAR ARE CAUGHT IN TRAP. THERE IS PLENTY OF WATER ALONG RIVER BUT GRASS RAPIDLY DISAPPEARING. THE THOUSANDS OF EMACIATED CATTLE CONCENTRATED BETWEEN SA AND KORIENTZE RAPIDLY DYING AND THERE LIKELY TO BE CLEAN SWEEP UNLESS RAIN STARTS EARLY WHICH IT PRACTICALLY NEVER DOES. EMBOFF SAY HUNDREDS OF CATTLE CARCASSES, MORE THAN IN ANY OTHER PART OF MALI. VERY DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE PERCENTAGE LOSS OF CATTLE BECAUSE SOME HERDS FROM MALI AND SURROUNDING COUNTRIES WHICH USUALLY GO ELSEWHERE CAME TO DELTA THIS YEAR, WHILE WISER SONRHAI AND TUAREG HERDSMEN WHO USUALLY SPEND DRY SEASON FIGHTING OVER PASTURES IN DELTA SEEM TO HAVE MOVED FURTHER SOUTH.

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